



Is It Done Yet? How to Know if You're Grilling Safely

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MADISON – If you've ever taken a piece of meat off the grill only to return it moments later because it wasn't done, you've probably asked yourself each time "How am I supposed to know when it's done?" Since July is National Grilling Month, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP) Division of Food Safety has the answer for all the backyard chefs of summer.

"The meat industry has put in a huge effort to prevent contamination with pathogenic bacteria. But raw meats and poultry may still sometimes contain these disease-causing organisms. Consumers can minimize the risk of foodborne illness by properly cooking meat and poultry when they grill out," says Steve Ingham, Division Administrator.

While many outdoor revelers rely on a sense of timing, the food safety experts at DATCP say the best method for testing the safety of grilled meats is to use a thermometer which has the temperature sensor at its tip – not partway up the stem of the thermometer.

DATCP also advises you to go by the USDA's recommended safe cooking temperatures. It's important to note that many recipes cite estimated times. So, instead of watching the clock, refer to your thermometer.

"Guessing can lead to problems, either in terms of safety (under-cooking) or quality (over-cooking). Take the guesswork out of the process – we recommend using a tip-sensitive digital thermometer," Ingham says.

Generally speaking, beef roasts including bone-in or boneless rib roast, rump, and tenderloin should reach 145°F for medium rare, 160°F for medium, and 170°F for well-done. Ground beef should always be cooked to 160°F, while steaks can be cooked to 145°F. Lamb cooking temperatures are the same as beef.

Pork requires a bit more time on the grill. Roasts including Boston butt, crown, loin and legs should reach a minimum cooking temperature of 160°F for medium and 170°F for well-done.

All poultry, regardless of the cut, should reach at least 165°F on a thermometer.

For a more detailed outline of recommended cooking times, visit datcp.wi.gov and search "meat cooking times."

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